



United States Department of Agriculture

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

June 2015

A FAREWELL
FROM JAY MAR

25 NRCS OFFICES TO GET
NEW SOIL NITRATE TEST TOOL

NATURAL RESOURCES
CONSERVATION SERVICE

www.ia.nrcs.usda.gov



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a **Message** from the **State Conservationist**



Jay Mar,
State Conservationist

"Dream On"

A man dreams of someday becoming a leader. He whispers final words to his ailing mother that someday he will be that leader, and he begins actively pursuing his dream. Sometimes the difference between just dreaming and actually seeing those dreams come to life is setting GOALS. When a person establishes goals, challenges are now perceived as opportunities and not obstacles. It is a part of the journey towards achieving success.

We have a dream for Iowa - people working together to create healthy productive landscapes. Together, we established goals to enhance our technical and planning capabilities, to become more accountable, more efficient, to value our people, to build partnerships, and to market conservation. And through our 5-Year Strategic Plan, we created a map to make sure everyone knew the direction and to ensure everyone got to the same destination together.

Well into the journey I noticed positive change amongst us. We are now more confident and aware of our capabilities. We are more eager to enhance our technical and conservation planning skills. We made structural changes and business tool improvements to reduce re-work, and to gain more time in the field. We have made a significant investment in training our people and building our skill sets. We are utilizing the latest in Engineering and Science technology to improve our efficiency and to promote conservation. We have created more award opportunities and recently increased our hiring of positions. We have significantly increased our partnerships activities to amplify our numbers and to ensure consistent messaging and assistance. We have capitalized on marketing opportunities including social media and soil health. We have become a stronger conservation family.

Now as I sunset my career with NRCS, it is important that you continue the journey. It is important for Iowa's future. I also want to thank you for your help in making a dream come true. I became the 9th State Conservationist of the great state of Iowa...I told my mother I would become a leader! Happy Trails to our Iowa family.

Jay and Linda

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jay Mar".

IOWA CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS

Current Developments is a product of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Des Moines, Iowa, published bimonthly by the Iowa NRCS Public Affairs Staff in cooperation with NRCS and partner agency employees from across the state.

CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS STORIES AND PHOTOS

Please submit your Current Developments story ideas and photos to State Public Affairs Specialist Laura Crowell at laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov. Past issues can be found at www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/ia/people/employees/?cid=nrcs142p2_008273



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ASIAN FESTIVAL: NRCS REACHES OUT DURING MAY EVENT

Several Iowa NRCS employees participated in 13th Annual Asian Heritage Festival in Des Moines on Saturday, May 23, 2015. Greg Townley, the Iowa NRCS Asian American Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program Manager, along with volunteers James Gibbs, Jean Sandstrom, Alan Lauver, and Judy Martinson, greeted Festival-goers at this year's event.

Based on requests at last year's Festival, the booth was stocked with plenty of children's conservation activities and urban conservation materials, in addition to the standard agricultural materials on conservation programs and practices, volunteer opportunities, and career opportunities with NRCS. The children's material, in particular, was a big hit with both children and adults at the Festival. Conservation posters were also provided to teachers.

The 2011 Census lists 66,595 Asian and Pacific-Americans live in Iowa, including 16,000 in Polk County. Approximately 50,000 visitors were expected at the festival this year, which featured more than a dozen Asian Villages where participants enjoyed a large variety of Asian food, educational activities, dozens of live entertainers and several mascots.



Iowa NRCS hosted a booth at the 13th Annual Asian Heritage Festival in Des Moines, May 23, 2015.

Each May, the Iowa Asian Alliance unites the different Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islander communities in Iowa to make this festival come to life. This year's celebration will honor the 40th anniversary of the resettlement of Southeast Asian Refugees. Employees interested in volunteering for next year's festival should contact Greg Townley at 641-528-2065, ext. 108.

PRESIDENT'S AWARD: MEYER-DIDERIKSEN HONORED BY AIANEA

Tanya Meyer-Dideriksen, Area Easement Specialist in Washington, Iowa, was awarded the President's Award from the American Indian Alaska Native Employee's Association of NRCS (AIANEA) in November at the national conference that took place in Atmore, Alabama, on the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Reservation.

The purpose of the AIANEA President's Award is for the President to acknowledge the

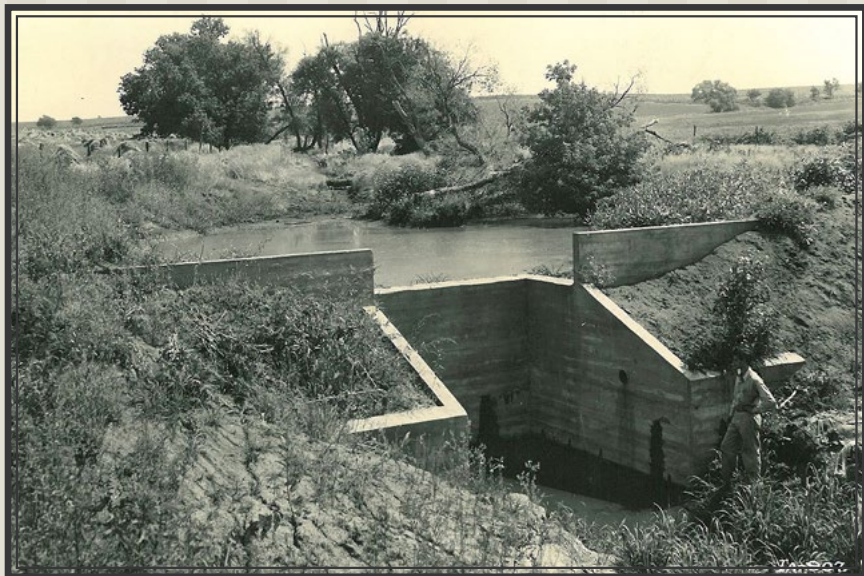
outstanding contributions of individual members and their commitment to the association.

Tanya, third from the left in the picture shown at right, was chosen specifically by the President to receive this distinguished award. She received a hand woven honeysuckle basket made by a member of the Poarch Band of Creek Tribe.



BACK IN THE DAY

1937



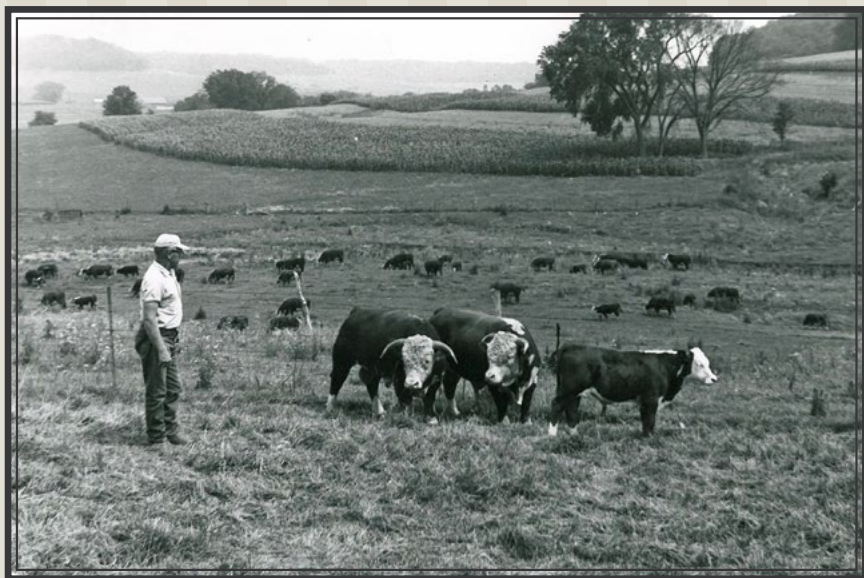
At left, a U-type weir notch dam was built in the winter of 1936 on the Frank Van Buskirk farm in Shenandoah. The drainage area of the structure is 110 acres. The notch is 2'6" x 19'. The height of the structure is 9'6". (Photo taken 7/18/37)

At right, officials sign a contract for the first Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) work in Iowa on the Rozenboom site in Mahaska County.

1979



1967



Jackson County cattleman Ralph Kohlenberg looks over two of his purebred bulls. Kohlenberg farmed 238 acres 11 miles northwest of Bellevue. He started stripcropping in 1967 and is improving pasture with trefoil. He also treated gully erosion problems with grassed waterways as part of his soil conservation plan.

If you have a "Back in the Day" picture you would like to contribute, please mail it to Jason Johnson or Laura Crowell in the State Office, or scan and e-mail a high resolution version to laura.crowell@ia.usda.gov.

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

Kayla Creek

Title: District Conservationist
(Creston/Mt. Ayr Management Unit)

College Education:

» B.S. in Agronomy, Iowa State University, 2005

Younger Years: Kayla grew up on a farm north of Marengo in Iowa County. She was involved in 4-H and FFA throughout her youth. Kayla's family had a cow/calf operation until this winter and a farrow to finish swine operation until 2000. Today, her father and brother work on the family farm, growing corn, soybeans, alfalfa, and oats.

Conservation Career: Kayla is the new district conservationist for the Union/Ringgold Management Unit. She started in this position on May 18, 2015.

- Kayla came back to Iowa from Muleshow, TX, where she served as the district conservationist since October 2010.
- From 2007-2009, Kayla was the County Agriculture Agent in Hardin County, Kentucky.
- She began her conservation career in Texas, as a soil conservationist in Spearman, beginning in September 2005. While in Texas, she also worked in Fort Hood, Cooper, and Franklin.

Conservation Background:

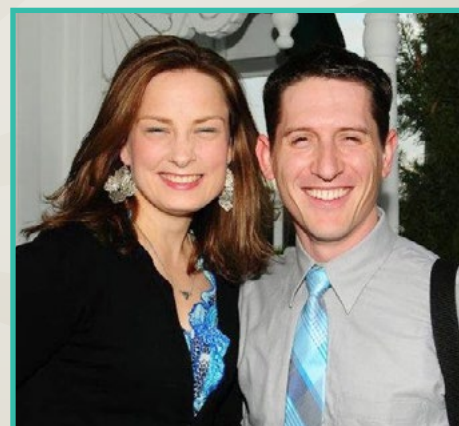
Growing up on a farm, Kayla says natural resource conservation was ingrained in her mind since she was young. "At the time, I may not have always understood the science behind it, but I knew it was important to be a good steward," she said. "Through 4-H and FFA,

my desire to work with farmers grew and so did my interest in soils."

Family & Free Time: Kayla says her 8-month old daughter, Amelia, keeps her busy most of the time these days. When she does have time to catch her breath she enjoys cooking, gardening and practicing archery.

"Hopefully being closer to the farm, I will be able to walk the field with dad often, instead of during a quick visit," she said.

Kayla is married to Clay. They have three dogs.



Kayla with husband, Clay



NRCS District Conservationists Larrette Kolbe and Denis Schulte organized the 2015 Summer Student Tour.

STUDENT TOUR: NW IOWA

Thirteen students from the NRCS Pathway Programs, IDALS and local District interns recently participated in the 2015 Student Tour. The group viewed sites in Buena Vista and Sac Counties.

This year's students came from Iowa, Virginia, Michigan and California. They toured a local implement dealer, Allee Research Farm, and a CREP/Stream bank stabilization project.

Pathway student Paige Crane said, "I learned quite a lot on the trips and talks, and I think it helped fill in a lot of the holes in my knowledge. I appreciate that even with such a small group of students, NRCS made the effort to make it possible for us."

SPOTLIGHT [VIDEO]

90 Seconds to discover a new "Hope in healthy soil"



Developed by the NRCS Soil Health Team, this [90 second ad](#) shows why the solutions to many of today's production and environmental challenges are closer than most might imagine - right under our feet.



GET FREE PERSONAL MY SOCIAL SECURITY ACCOUNT

You probably plan to receive Social Security benefits someday. Maybe you already do. Either way, you'll want a my Social Security account to:

- Keep track of your earnings and verify them every year;
- Get an estimate of your future benefits if you are still working;
- Get a letter with proof of your benefits if you currently receive them; and
- Manage your benefits:
 - » Change your address;
 - » Start or change your direct deposit; and
 - » Get a replacement SSA-1099 or SSA-1042S for tax season.

Setting up an account is quick, secure, and easy. Join the millions and create an account now! <http://www.ssa.gov/myaccount/>



HR
CORNER

SAVE THE DATE Professional Development Event • Thursday, August 13 • Ankeny, Iowa

Sponsored by the Iowa NRCS
Federal Women's Program

Contact Nicky Williams for more details:
319-824-3634, x 3

Agronomy 360 SOILSCAN Tool Coming Soon!

By Barb Stewart, State Agronomist



Barb Stewart

New technology offered from the 360 Yield Center may be available at your local NRCS office soon. Iowa NRCS plans to purchase 25 360 SOILSCAN units to help producers and water quality project coordinators make decisions on nitrogen

management from soil nitrate levels and, in the future, determine nitrates in tile water.

The units will assist producers who want to improve their nitrogen management by providing real-time soil nitrate testing. Real-time data is crucial to make timely, in-season nitrogen application decisions in a split-application management system and to understand the fate of nitrate-N in the soil.

360 SOILSCAN is a portable, in-season soil testing lab that gives the user the ability to soil sample and receive results on soil nitrates instantly throughout the season. Unlike most laboratories, which dry out the soil prior to testing, 360 SOILSCAN does not alter the soil. The 360 SOILSCAN measures the nitrogen that is immediately available in the soil, showing the producer what the plant has to work with at that time. You can immediately see what is affecting yield and adjust the nutrient management plan in a more accurate and timely manner.

The 360 SOILSCAN tool will be strategically located around the state in NRCS field offices. Staff will be trained on how a producer should take the soil samples, the use of the 360 SOILSCAN tool, and most importantly, what the results mean and how to properly manage the nitrogen needs of the crop for the remainder of the growing season.



CONSERVATION FOR NEW EMPLOYEES: APPLICATION



Participants and Instructors (I) at the June 15-19, 2015, Conservation for New Employees - Application

Front row - left to right: Devin Brincks, Mark Jensen (I), Adam Gottemoeller, James Sholly, Rebekah Benson, Stacie Lowe, Ava Haun, Brittany Eichhorst, Michelle Turner, Jackie Rogers.

Second row - left to right: Giles Munden, Dale Schmeiser, Jennifer Nieland, Nic Zmoos, Addie Hillmer, Joyce Bassett, Lanessa Baker, Mindy Sieck, Linda Shumate, Daryl Boulware (I), Carolyn Schwartz (I), Angie Freilinger-Mohs (I)

Third row - left to right: Nathan Shelman, Curtis Barclay, Craig Foster, Curt Fopma (I), Ross Frederiksen (I), Josh Schuster, Norman Friedrich (I), Matt Allen, Aaron Eggert, Doug Jarr (I), Nick Schaefer (I), Andrew Focht (I), Jeff Lutz (I)

Twenty-four NRCS, IDALS-DSC, and local soil and water conservation district employees participated in the Conservation for New Employees - Application course held June 15-19, 2015, at the Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge in Prairie City.

The course provides training on basic surveying, grassed waterway and outlet structure design, and terrace layout and design.

Class participants are now able to set up and operate an automatic level, perform routine surveys with adequate survey notes, and layout, survey, and design parallel terrace systems, grassed waterways, and grade stabilization structures with supervision.



Taking a break from terrace layout training, trainer Carolyn Schwartz, soil conservation technician in Jefferson (left), enjoys some beautiful weather at Neal Smith Wildlife Refuge with Addie Hillmer, a watershed coordinator in Oskaloosa.

TEST TIME: TAKE THE SOIL HEALTH IQ QUIZ TODAY!



Healthy soil is fundamental to life. But how much do you really know about it? This fun, [10-question quiz](#) will challenge your knowledge, and will help you discover your soil health I.Q. And, anyone who plays can print out a graduation certificate upon completion. Find out if you're a "Soil Health Scholar," a "Soil Healthy Smarty-Pants" or if you just "Love the Soil."

This is one test we think you'll really dig! Take the quiz. And then share your results with your friends and followers on Facebook or Twitter. It's fun and informative.

MAKING AN IMPRESSION: NO-TILL DEMONSTRATION UNIT

Thanks to a grant from the Farm Bureau, the Washington Soil and Water Conservation District is displaying this no-till planter demonstration unit in their field office.

"We are getting a ton of people stopping to look at it and ask questions," said Sarah Ham, soil conservationist with NRCS. "We are also taking it to field days."

"If other offices can find the funding, it's something they may want to get for their offices," said Ham.



Take Your “Talents” to Marshalltown!

What:

2015 Iowa NRCS 2-Person Best Shot Golf Tournament

When:

Friday, August 28, 2015, 9 a.m. Shotgun Start

Where:

American Legion Memorial Golf Course
1301 South 6th Street, Marshalltown, IA 50158
(641) 752-1834



Who:

All NRCS employees, friends, family, retirees,
and conservation partners

Hosted by:
Jason Johnson (515-991-7143) and
Dana Holland (641-753-8677)

Cost:

\$55 per person (Includes 18 holes of golf, cart, lunch, and prizes)

Take Your “Talents” to Marshalltown!

2015 Iowa NRCS 2-Person Best Shot Golf Tournament
Friday, Aug. 28, 2015, 9 a.m.,
American Legion Memorial Golf Course, Marshalltown

Sign-Up Sheet

Name: _____

Playing Partner: _____

Is there a twosome you prefer to be paired with?

Who?

Contact Jason Johnson (jason.r.johnson@ia.usda.gov) if you would like to play, but do not have a playing partner, or if you have any questions.

Please enclose a check for \$55 payable and addressed to the address below **by Fri., Aug. 14, 2015:**

Jason Johnson
USDA-NRCS
210 Walnut Street, Room 693
Des Moines, IA 50309

Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Cibula, Christina	Business Tools Coordinator	Reassignment	4/19/15	Vinton
Harman, Michelle	Farm Bill Specialist	Reassignment	4/19/15	Le Mars
Jontz, Jack	Soil Conservation Technician	Retirement	4/30/15	Audubon
Knudsen, Chris	Human Resources Director	Retirement	5/2/15	Des Moines
Williams, Ronald	Civil Engineering Technician	Retirement	5/2/15	Storm Lake Engineering
Fenderson, Kristen	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	5/3/15	Muscatine
Groth, Jacob	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	5/3/15	Hampton
Harris-Hull, Kris	Area Program Specialist	Promotion	5/3/15	Fairfield Area
Smith, Joe	Area Program Specialist	Promotion	5/3/15	West Union Area
Stewart, Jennifer	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	5/3/15	Albia
York, Kristy	Area Program Specialist	Promotion	5/3/15	Atlantic Area
Erickson, Roger	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	5/3/15	West Union Area
Reiter-Marolf, William	Wetland Specialist	Career Conditional Appointment	5/17/15	Williamsburg
Mesmer, Ryan	Wetland Specialist	Converted to Career Conditional Appointment	5/17/15	Atlantic
Abercrombie, Regena	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/17/15	Sac City
Blodgett, Kelsey	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/17/15	West Union
Crane, Paige	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/17/15	Creston
Fopma, Collin	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/17/15	Storm Lake
Mancos, Ethan	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/17/15	Ida Grove
Simon, Joshua	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/17/15	Wapello
VanderWoude, Alisha	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/17/15	Elkader
Creek, Kayla	District Conservationist	Promotion	5/17/15	Creston MU
Williams, Nichole	Resource Conservationist	Promotion	5/17/15	Grundy Center
Fischer, Jaia	Business Services Specialist	Reassignment	5/17/15	Des Moines
Hill, Stephanie	Resource Conservationist	Reassignment	5/17/15	Fort Dodge MU
Thomas, Janet	Civil Engineering Technician	Reassignment	5/17/15	Cherokee

Changes In IOWA NRCS PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Godin, George	Wetland Specialist	Career Conditional Appointment	5/31/15	Storm Lake
Janiczak, Catherine	Wetland Specialist	Converted to Career Conditional Appointment	5/31/15	Creston
Mahoney, Michael	Wetland Specialist	Converted to Career Conditional Appointment	5/31/15	Boone
Olsen, Nicole	Student Trainee	Converted to Excepted Appt.	5/31/15	Sidney
Williams, Halley	Student Trainee	Excepted Appt.	5/31/15	Tipton
Hollingsworth, Jeremy	Civil Engineering Technician	Promotion	5/31/15	Fairfield Engineering
Orr, Allison	Area Program Specialist	Promotion	5/31/15	Fort Dodge Area
Porter, Lance	Soil Conservationist	Promotion	6/14/15	Winterset
Beltz, Abby	Business Tools Coordinator	Reassignment	6/14/15	Atlantic Area

Changes In IDALS-DSC PERSONNEL

NAME	TITLE	NATURE OF ACTION	EFFECTIVE DATE	LOCATION
Yanak, Kadie	Secretary	New Hire	6/19/15	Crawford SWCD